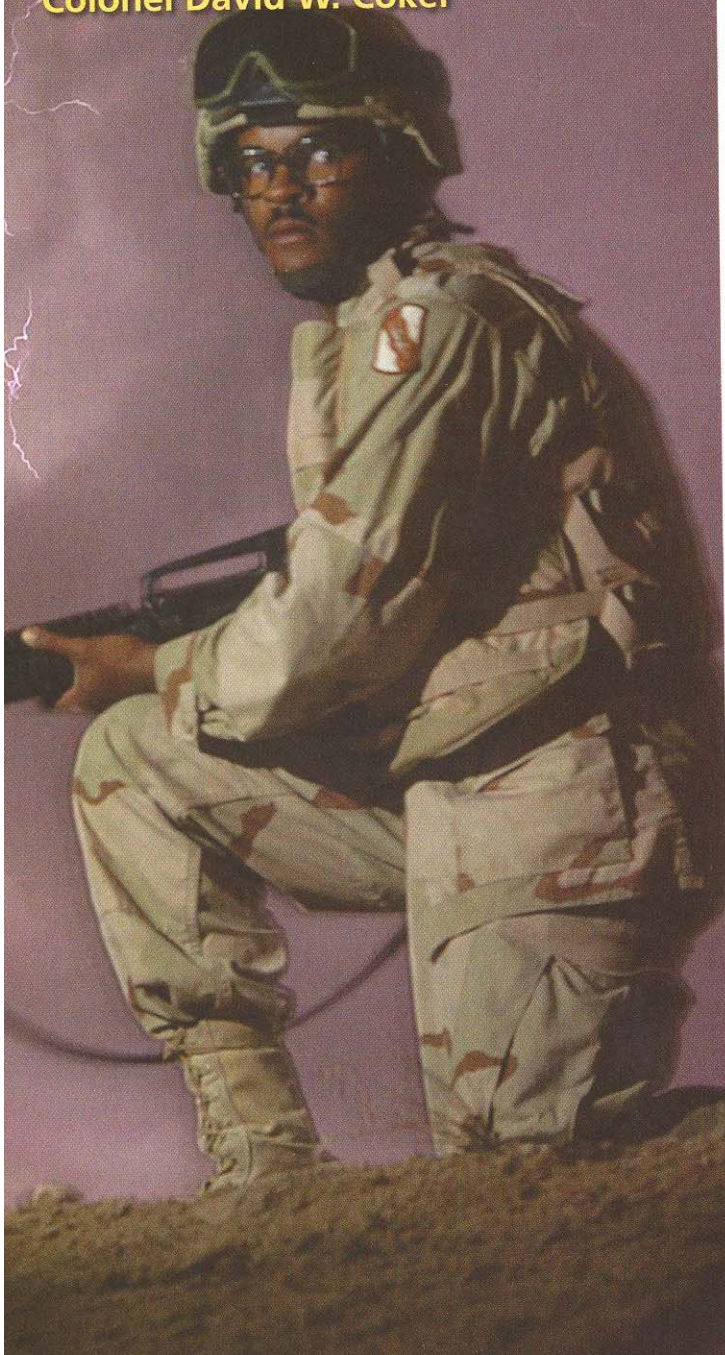


Financial Management Tactical Platform

—A Success Story

How today's Army meets the finance support requirements of its warfighters.

Colonel David W. Coker



Financial Management Tactical Platform (FMT) is accomplishing its goal of providing financial support to soldiers in their tactical environment. It is the first deployable automation system designed to support the operations of finance units on the battlefield. FMT is truly a success story for the finance community. It provides finance automation vendor services, military pay, disbursing, accounting, and resource services to support the tactical commander.

FMT is currently in service supporting both U.S. Army Active and Reserve and Army National Guard units in Iraq and Afghanistan. Users with automation skills across the spectrum find the equipment simple to use and highly effective at providing financial support to deployed soldiers.

Once fully fielded, FMT will be a combat multiplier for the warfighter as well as the vital, long-overdue link between tactical operations and the financial managers at Headquarters, Department of Defense. FMT also allows compliance with congressional/Department of Defense (DoD)-mandated financial management reporting requirements, and it improves internal controls that reduce risk of loss of funds.

Background

The requirement for FMT grew out of the experiences of Operation Desert Storm. Then, U.S. Army finance units did not have a deployable, combat-ready platform capable of providing financial support to soldiers. Instead, the Finance Corps relied mainly on the "Sneakernet," which actually involved physically transporting financial transactions on floppy disks to a battalion for submission to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS). This was a very time-consuming and cumbersome task.

Acquisition Strategy

In 2000, the system now known as FMT was transitioned from a DoD initiative to an Army-only, TRADOC (Training and Doctrine Command) warfighter

(During Operation Desert Storm, U.S. Army finance units did not have a deployable, combat-ready platform capable of providing financial support to soldiers.)

apid acquisition project. The key to its rapid development was to reuse and repackage existing DFAS software and use commercial off-the-shelf hardware. By using what is essentially the same software that finance soldiers use in garrison today, only one week of new-equipment training was required in order for units to be fully capable of employing FMTP.

By adopting this accelerated acquisition strategy, FMTP has enabled the Finance Corps to acquire a state-of-the-art, versatile solution to meet the finance support requirements of soldiers. Currently under the management of Project Manager, Logistics Information Systems (PM LIS), FMTP has transitioned from a prototype set of equipment to a system ready for type classification and full-production fielding decision.

Communications Backbone

A critical requirement of the FMTP architecture is the communications backbone. PM LIS selected the Combat Service Support Automated Information Systems Interface (CAISI) as the


solution for linking FMTP to the tactical communications network. CAISI provides secure wireless local area network connections to extend tactical connectivity capability from the theater level to the brigade support area. CAISI operates over existing military communications networks, that is, Mobile Subscriber Equipment, the Tri-Service Tactical Communications System, Defense Data Network, Defense-switching Network, U.S. Public switched networks, and commercial communications systems. By using CAISI, instead of developing and procuring a unique communications and networking capability, PM LIS realized a cost avoidance of approximately one million dollars.

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System Testing

The FMTP system has gone through rigorous testing during the past two years. The latest milestone occurred in January 2004 when the Operation Evaluation Test was conducted by the Army Test and Evaluation Command. That test used finance soldiers from the 15th Finance Battalion at Fort Hood, Texas. After a week of new equipment training, the soldiers of the 15th Finance Battalion were able to set up, configure, and operate FMTP while in a field environment. The result of the evaluation was that FMTP is fully suitable to be fielded to all Army finance units.

Currently, FMTP has been fielded as a prototype to 1 finance command, 37 finance battalions, and 116 finance detachments as well as to selected organizations in the CENTCOM AOR. To date, 5 finance battalions are utilizing FMTP in various hostile environments around the world. 



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